

AK Bristol Bay Salmon Set Gillnet Fishery

Fishing gear type: Gillnet

Current category: Category II*

Basis for current classification on the LOF: Based on analogy to other Category II AK set gillnet fisheries. The level of marine mammal mortality and serious injury in this fishery is assumed to be similar to those in other Category II set gillnet fisheries.

Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed: Beluga whale, Bristol Bay; Gray whale, Eastern North Pacific; Harbor seal, Bering Sea; Northern fur seal, North Pacific; Spotted seal, AK.

Estimated number of current participants: 983

Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery: None.

Year added to the LOF: 1996

Category when originally listed: Category II

Basis for original classification on the LOF: This fishery was categorized as a Category II based on analogy to other set gillnet fisheries. Observer coverage was inadequate to determine if serious injury and mortality levels in this fishery were greater than 1% of a marine mammal stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level, but it was assumed to be similar to marine mammal serious injury and mortality levels incidental to other AK set gillnet fisheries. Also, logbook data showed that the total mortality and serious injury of beluga whales (Bristol Bay stock) was 0.5 animals/year, or 2% of PBR.

Estimated number of participants when originally listed: 888

Past names, if any: AK Bristol Bay set gillnet (until 1999).

Gear description/method for fishing: This fishery uses set gillnet gear with continuous soak times during the opener[†], but the net is dry during low tide. Fishing effort occurs during the day and night, with 2 or more continuous sets per day.

Target species: Although sockeye salmon is the most abundant salmon species that returns to Bristol Bay each year, Chinook, chum, Coho, and pink salmon returns are also important to the fishery.

Spatial/temporal distribution of effort: This fishery generally operates from June 17 to the end of August or mid-September in Bristol Bay. The Bristol Bay Management Area consists of five management districts including all coastal and inland waters from Cape Newenham to Cape Menshikof. There are eight major river systems in the area, and these form the largest commercial sockeye salmon fishery in the world. Approximately 20% of the salmon catch in Bristol Bay is caught with set gillnets.

* The fishery is classified by analogy to other gear types or fisheries that are known to cause mortality or serious injury of marine mammals.

[†] Salmon may only be fished commercially during periods known as openers established by the AK Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) in-season. Openers may last days or weeks. The ADFG posts weekly notices of fishing openers and announces the openers on regular radio channels. Fishing periods are often extended by emergency order during the last 24 hours of the opener.

Levels of observer coverage each year[‡]: This fishery has not been observed by the Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program.

Management and regulations: This fishery is managed by the AK Department of Fish and Game as a limited entry fishery with gear restrictions the mesh and net size, and area closures.

History of Changes on the LOF

2009 LOF: Estimated number of participants updated from 1,104 to 983.

2006 LOF: Added a superscript “2” in Table 1 after this fishery, indicating that this fishery is classified by analogy.

2001 LOF:

- Estimated number of participants updated from 941 to 1,014.

1999 LOF:

- Spotted seal (AK) added to list of species/stocks incidentally killed/injured in this fishery. The 1997 SAR for reported that mortalities were recorded in logbook records in 1990 (5 spotted seals) and 1991 (1 spotted seal). Logbook data for drift and set gillnet fisheries were combined. As a result, some of the mortalities may have occurred in the drift gillnet.
- Renamed "AK Bristol Bay salmon set gillnet" to specify the target species.
- Estimated number of participants updated from 967 to 941.

1998 LOF:

- Northern fur seal (North Pacific) added to list of species/stocks incidentally killed/injured in this fishery. The 1998 SAR reported that mortalities were recorded in logbook records in 1990 (5 seals) and 1992 (49 seals). Logbook data for drift and set gillnet fisheries were combined. As a result, some of the mortalities may have occurred in the drift gillnet.
- Estimated number of participants updated from 888 to 967.

[‡] Observer coverage levels include the latest information reported in the most current final Stock Assessment Reports (SAR).